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detract from the value of the volume, which contains a vast amount of good information and should be in the hands of every bird student in the land.

W. F. H.

CHECK LIST OF NORTH AMERICAN BIRDS. THIRD EDITION REVISED  
AUGUST, 1910.

After preparation of four years the "new" Check List at last has made its appearance. We are both delighted with it and disappointed. Delighted with the nine changes in the construction of the new edition as enumerated on pages 11 and 12, disappointed because some other changes, timely and needed, indeed, have not been forthcoming. It may perhaps seem superfluous to give another review of this work, since an extended review of it has already appeared in the Auk. Unfortunately, however, the reviewer in the Auk is himself a member (in fact the chairman of the committee) which had the preparation of the Check List in hands, hence, although we have the greatest personal respect and admiration for him, cannot though he may strenuously strive to be absolutely impartial in his review. On the other hand we well know that the Reviews signed J. A. A. stand exactly for the views of J. A. A., and do not necessarily have back of them the authority of the entire A. O. U. Likewise the initials here appended indicate only the writer as responsible for the stand taken.

The List as a whole is a great improvement over the former editions, as in giving determination of type species, stating type localities and similar other matters. A purely typographical error is found on page 262, the Genitive of Gambel must be gambeli and not gambel. An inconsistency is the accentuation of Calidris in *Calidris leucophaea* and *Calidris* in *Vireosylva calidris*, it should be calidris in both cases. The name of the Vesper Sparrow must be *Poœcetes* and "not" *Pœcetes*, for *Poa* and *oiketēs* can never be contracted into a word having the accent on the last syllable. To any scholar the perpetuation of such cacographical errors as *Leptotila* and *Harelda* and others is a source of grief, for no matter what the rules are governing our List in bird names in such cases, it is no more than proper that such glaring mistakes should be wiped out forever; or if the rules of nomenclature forbid the correct spelling of names, then change these rules.

We had fervently hoped to see a modern system of classification used in the Check List, for to place the Striges with the Falcones and Sarcorhamphi or better between the Falcones and Coccoyges, where they certainly do not belong, and similar instances are numerous enough, and then to excuse the retaining of the old system by saying "that all present systems of classification in orni-

thology are admittedly tentative" is certainly weak. "To use the old Check List system unchanged for the sake of convenience" is a very lame excuse for not giving us a modern and proper classification. Though this is bad enough, another disappointment is still worse, and neither justifiable nor excusable, the one pointed out by the late Dr. Elliot Coues in 1897 (*Auk* Vol. XIV, p. 229) viz. "that of passing from the lowest to the highest forms as applied to the families, but not to the genera within these families, a reversal of sequence of families coupled with non-reversal of the sequence of genera within the families." Dr. Coues quotes as an illustration the Anatidæ, and it is plain to any thinking person that he was correct in his remarks. Truly in regard to classification of birds—for the whole structure of a bird must be taken into consideration, not merely the external characters—the new Check List is a disappointment, and it will be a long time before it will be accepted as an authority along these lines!

The Geographical Ranges are admittedly difficult to work out, but we think had the authors consulted any Ohio ornithologist, as they did the Illinois men, or the pages of the *Wilson Bulletin*, errors and omissions concerning this state would have been avoided. The Chuck-will's-widow is erroneously credited to Ohio; the Anhinga, the Surf Scoter, the Brant, Cory's Least Bittern, Egret, Little Blue Heron, Ruff, Swallow-tailed Kite, Western Redtail, Goshawk, Red-cockaded Woodpecker, Yellow-headed Blackbird, Smith's Longspur, Leconte's Sparrow, Nelson's Sparrow, and many other species have been taken in Ohio and should be credited with an accidental, in some cases as the Little Blue Heron, with a casual occurrence in Ohio. The Prairie Chicken still exists in Michigan, the Olive-backed Thrush is of accidental occurrence in Europe—Russia for instance,—and the European Whitefronted Goose, if it is of doubtful record only from Eastern Greenland, should be relegated to the hypothetical list.

We had also hoped to see a rigid investigation into the standing and value of some subspecies. The Willow Goldfinch, the Desert Sparrow Hawk, and others too numerous to mention, should not be worthy of a name. Fifteen years ago the Scaup Duck of America was considered a subspecies with a name (*nearctica*), the Herring Gull likewise (*smithsonianus*) and any attempt to claim the futility of that procedure would have been scorned and castigated—but today we know their exact status through a thorough and unprejudiced investigation. Why not apply it to these cases of the present day? Many of these subspecific distinctions exist—as the writer well knows—and are of sufficient value to call for a name, many are only a matter of personal vanity or personal keenness of eye-sight, or ability to distinguish various unmentionable shades of one and

the same color, but all so minute and microscopic that they are not worthy of a name, but are merely what the Germans so aptly call "Gelehrtenspielereien." The millennium, however, is still a year or two distant, and up to that time we will have to be contented with merely stating our disappointments and waiting for wiser heads to solve the many problems that vex us and keep us from reaching perfection in our beloved science of ornithology.

W. F. H.

### Field Notes

A LITTLE HELP FROM THE CROWS.—It is all very well for the Easterner to saunter out into the grove on a mild April morning and mark down this year's crop of Crows' nests, all smugly outlined against a clear sky. Be the birds ever so secretive, the stark outlines of a Crow's nest in crotch of beech or elm are easy oological marks, especially if set off by a telltale black "handle." But Crows' nests in Western Washington are none of the commonest, and when the birds hide them, as they usually do, in the depths of fir trees (and sometimes at forbidding heights) the inquiring birdman naturally welcomes a little assistance in the search.

On the "prairies" of Pierce County the Douglas firs renounce their Olympian disdain and present heights that may be scanned by frail mortals not yet equipped with flying machines. But even here the quest is not easy. The firs, though dwarfed in height, are of very stocky growth, and afford eye-proof shelter for even a Crow's nest. A certain stretch of prairie, dotted here and there with fir clumps composed of trees from fifty to eighty feet in height, was evidently the breeding haunt of a small colony of Western Crows (*Corvus brachyrhynchos hesperis*). (The place is about ten miles from tide water, and the birds are really intermediate in size between *C. b. hesperis* and *C. b. caurinus*, but their voices are clear and their range is strictly inland).

I had lazily noted the activities of this colony on a previous visit, but I was ill-prepared to hear the insistent hunger cry of a manifest young Crow so early in the season. April 18, 1910, proceeding as it did from the top of a dense fir tree, one of a grove in which I lay watching for Kinglets. The tree was screened from view, but I soon located it by the sound, and eagerly drank in the ancient wail of the youngster while one of the parent birds answered warily from a distance.

It really was not worth while to climb the tree, but Bird-boy (*ornithologicus secundus maybe*) was very anxious to see a young Crow, and I went up. Judge of my surprise when a full grown Crow